REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)* 17-05-2005	2. REPORT TYPE FINAL	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Africa: A Common Operational Structure for the Future	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S) Richard W. Nelson College of Naval Warfare Paper Advisor (if Any):	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
 	
 AND ADDRESS(ES)
     Office of the Provost
     Naval War College
     686 Cushing Road
     Newport, RI 02841-1207
	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Department of State, Washington DC 20520	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES: A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Military Operations Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Department of State, the Naval War College, or the Department of the Navy.

14. ABSTRACT

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    The risks of unfocused action are substantial: instability leading to a breeding ground for terrorism, or conflict leading to calls for U.S. intervention. A common operational plan for engagement, development, and deterrence will not only reduce that risk, but will produce conditions conducive for economic growth and the development of democratic institutions and the rule of law.

    The structure recommended here renders moot the issue of revamping the combatant commands along different geographic lines. With a structure that provides a common platform of operational objectives, each CoCom will pursue consistent, synchronized, and mutually supportive programs. The principal benefit of coordination is unity of effort among combatant commands and the interagency and multinational communities.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Africa, Theater Security Cooperation

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Richard W. Nelson
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED		28	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER *(include area code)* 401-855-1918

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)

UNITED STATES NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, Rhode Island

AFRICA: A COMMON OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR THE FUTURE

by

Richard W. Nelson
U.S. Department of State

A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Department of State, the Naval War College, or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: *Richard W. Nelson*

17 May 2005

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Introduction and Thesis

In a 1995 report, the Department of Defense asserted that "America's security interests in Africa are very limited. . . . [W]e see very little traditional strategic interest in Africa."[1] This Clinton-era policy perspective was largely continued by the new administration of George W. Bush. After September 11, 2001, however, that – along with everything else – changed.

President Bush, in his 2002 report on National Security Strategy, wrote that the U.S. "must help strengthen Africa's fragile states, help build indigenous capability to secure porous borders, and help build up law enforcement. . . . An ever more lethal environment exists in Africa as local civil wars spread beyond borders to create regional war zones. Forming coalitions of the willing and cooperative security arrangements are key to confronting these emerging transnational threats."[2]

Although the President outlined a sweeping vision for U.S. policy in Africa, the fact is that Africa's importance is often overlooked as the political and military arms of government focus on Islamist extremism elsewhere in the context of the Global War on Terror.[3] Terrorism is a growing concern in Africa, but that is just part of the continent's geopolitical landscape. Terrorism may have been the catalyst for change, but the Bush Administration recognized that Africa was important for other reasons as well.

At the operational level, the focus of U.S. security assistance in Africa is on key partner states, envisioned as linchpins for stability across the continent. At the same time, planners maintain a keen eye on potential "failing states," which may pose the threat of conflict requiring U.S. intervention. In between these two extremes, bilateral security assistance to the dozens of other countries in Africa – those that are neither key partners nor

potential failed states – would be improved by a strategy that linked all instruments of national power to prevent conflict and promote development. Engagement on a range of issues by embassies and combatant commands, in a structure understood by all the U.S. Government players, would serve not just U.S. national interests but also the interests of Africas – to the common benefit of all.

This paper will outline a plan to provide a common operational picture for dealing with the complexities involved in the quest for long-term security in Africa. It is not a sweeping plan for revamping the U.S. Government's platform for action. That would be costly and unrealistic – and it is not necessary. Rather, it is a framework for action that will ensure that policymakers and operational leaders representing each dimension of national power are all working toward the same goals across the African continent.

Risks and Opportunities

Conflict in Africa runs a constant risk of spreading beyond the porous borders of weak states and escalating into situations requiring a costly response by the U.S. military. Terrorists with global reach may use Africa as a place to hide or train. The U.S. military establishment, in the 2004 report on National Military Strategy, puts Africa at the heart of a trans-global "arc of instability" stretching from the Western Hemisphere, through Africa and the Middle East, and extending to Asia.[4]

Many peacekeeping operations, both current and future, are almost certain to require the involvement of the U.S. military. Increasingly, these are conducted in cooperation with the UN or regional security institutions such as the African Union. Beyond the issue of regional conflict, the U.S. and other countries have growing economic interests in Africa.

There is certain to be increasing competition for Africa's plentiful resources among countries from all over the world. In the case of energy resources in particular, the questions are who has them, who wants them, and who will protect them. China has noticeably stepped up its presence in Africa in recent years. The U.S. will need to coordinate strategy and operations to protect access and lines of communication to critical areas throughout the continent.

The likelihood of disasters requiring a humanitarian response remains a major concern in Africa. Poverty persists throughout the continent, and pandemics threaten to break out and affect populations without regard for national boundaries. Development assistance can and does help, but it will be a long time before the need for humanitarian operations involving the U.S. military are a thing of the past.

One senior U.S. official stated that "Africa is now at a crossroads in political, military and economic terms."[5] Challenges include "civil war, insurgencies, 'warlordism,' and terrorism. . . . [C]onflict within one country can easily spill over into its neighbors," and "breakdowns in governmental authority can create ungoverned areas." Responding to these challenges will require coordination of all instruments of U.S. national power.

Key States, Failing States, and Everything in Between

African nations will require assistance for the foreseeable future to build a sound regional security system. "It is in the long-term national interest of the United States to shape this transformation….[T]o do so, America must carefully coordinate political, economic, and military actions and exercise diplomatic skill, political sensitivity, and patience."[6]

The U.S. Government focuses substantial attention at the strategic and operational levels on providing security assistance to key states. There is also a great deal of talk about the need to prepare for operations in "failing states." This is appropriate, but it is probably not sufficient to minimize risks while exploring opportunities. Bilateral relationships exist with all African states, but a coordinated approach on security would pay dividends across the spectrum. There is a need for more structure in our overall political-military approach to all African states.

Wanted: Greater Coordination

There is no shortage of programs within the U.S. Government and military addressing problems and interests in Africa. There is, however, a lack of coordination within the military and between the military and other interagency partners. Moreover, a lack of synchronization of bilateral programs with the activities of African sub-regional organizations, whose goals and priorities vary from region to region, represents a weakness in the U.S. approach.

Much of Africa, including most of Sub-Saharan Africa, is in European Command area of responsibility (AOR) – 42 countries in total. Parts of North and East Africa (eight countries) are in Central Command's AOR, and three African island nations in the Indian Ocean are in Pacific Command's AOR.[7] This division of attention can hamper our efforts to achieve national objectives in Africa. For example, Kenya is recognized by all as a key state in sub-Saharan Africa. But the combatant command with primary responsibility for that region (EUCOM) is not responsible for Kenya – CENTCOM is.

Better coordination will bring unity of effort and enhance the likelihood of success in achieving our objectives. The Defense Department's Unified Command Plan states that "[w]hen significant operations overlap boundaries, a task force will be formed."[8] However, the focus here is on activities, not operations. A common framework for activities among combatant commands and interagency partners will provide the needed coordination.

The Department of State also has divided responsibility for Africa. Most countries are in the African Affairs Bureau, but the five nations of North Africa are the responsibility of the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau. Moreover, much of the policy and operational work on Africa involves the principal international organization on the continent: the African Union (AU). But the AU's membership includes all but one of the states of North Africa, a region that is partly within EUCOM's AOR and partly within CENTCOM's, and not at all within State's Africa Bureau.

If that were not enough, the focus of much policy and operational attention in Africa is increasingly on sub-regional organizations on the continent. These organizations, whose main functions are largely economic rather than security-related, include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC), the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Arab Maghreb Union serves a similar role for the five countries of North Africa. These groups each have a mission specific to their sub-region, and coordinating their activities on security matters is difficult when their counterparts in the U.S. military establishment are divided among three combatant commands. A common plan would alleviate that problem.

U.S. Security Objectives in Africa

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, in the 2005 National Defense Strategy, made no specific reference to Africa, but the objectives he outlined are applicable to the security situation on the continent. Those objectives include: securing strategic access and lines of communication to key regions; strengthening alliances and partnerships to help partners increase their capacity to collectively meet challenges to common interests; and establishing favorable security conditions by working with other nations.[9] A key operational goal is to increase the capabilities of allies and partners abroad through a security cooperation program that will "identify areas where our common interests would be served better by partners playing leading roles; encouraging partners to increase their capability and willingness to operate in coalition with our forces; seeking authorities to facilitate cooperation with partner militaries and ministries of defense; and spurring the military transformation of key allies through development of a common security assessment and joint, combined training and education, combined concept development and experimentation, information sharing, and combined command and control."[10]

A former U.S. ambassador now on the faculty of the National Defense University has advanced a policy for Africa resting on seven pillars, as follows: "strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law; encouraging economic reform and growth; building partnerships in the global war on terrorism; combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic; expanding American trade and investment; helping to prevent and resolve conflicts; [and] fostering regional integration."[11] For the most part, the Bush Administration is pursuing these goals in variety of assistance programs and development aid.

The U.S. Government's underlying goal regarding security in Africa "is to increase the capacity of our friends to provide for their own security." The key to achieving this goal is "strengthening institutions in Africa."[12] Several U.S. initiatives contribute to this effort, though not necessarily in an entirely coordinated fashion.

Current U.S. Initiatives

The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), with funding of $660 million over five years (fiscal years 2005 through 2009), initially focused on Africa, but the Bush Administration now plans to expand it to Asia, Europe, and Latin America. GPOI subsumes another Bush initiative, the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program, which itself succeeded a Clinton Administrative program, the African Crisis Response Initiative. Another $33 million for military training was provided over the 1998-2005 period through the Enhanced International Peacekeeping Capabilities (EIPC) program.[13]

The primary purpose of GPOI at the outset was to train and equip, by 2010, some 75,000 mostly African military troops for peacekeeping operations. GPOI-funded training will address Africa's needs for peacekeepers and "gendarmes," or policy forces with military skills. GPOI will also support Italy's constabulary training center and a logistics system to deploy and support peacekeeping operations in Africa.[14]

ACOTA provides training in military tactics and offensive operations as well as peacekeeping. The program is designed to enhance the capability of African militaries to conduct operations in hostile environments.[15] Offensive military weaponry is also provided to selected countries. A separate but similar initiative is the African Regional Peacekeeping

Program. There are eight current UN peacekeeping missions in Africa: UNMIS (Sudan), ONUB (Burundi), UNOCI (Cote d'Ivoire), UNMIL (Liberia), MONUC (Democratic Republic of the Congo), UNMEE (Ethiopia and Eritrea), UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone), and MINURSO (Western Sahara). Fifteen earlier peacekeeping operations were conducted during the period since decolonization. The U.S. has supported each of these, in some cases with direct military involvement.[16]

The African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), established in 1999 under the auspices of the National Defense University, offers training for high-level African military officers and civilian officials. ACSS, which plans to expand its outreach programs significantly in the years ahead, seeks to promote security-sector professionalism and the development of strong, democratic, civil-military relations.[17]

The View from Foggy Bottom

The Department of State supports expanded engagement in Africa to advance U.S. national interests – promoting peace and stability, advancing the spread of democracy, combating terrorism, encouraging economic development, and alleviating human suffering.[18] The two key principles are shared responsibility and partnership. African nations supply more than 30 percent of the forces in UN peacekeeping missions around the world. Conflict in Africa presents the greatest threat to progress. The U.S. is committed to supporting the African Union and sub-regional organizations to strengthen their ability to implement solutions.[19]

The U.S. supports economic reform in Africa through mechanisms like the African Union's New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD).[20] Since 2000, there has been a

four-fold increase in total U.S. assistance to sub-Saharan Africa, which now stands at $4.6 billion per year. Of the 15 "focus countries" for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, 12 are in Africa. Of the 17 countries eligible for first-year funding from the Millennium Challenge Account, eight were in Africa.[21]

In recognition of the growing importance of access to energy and other natural resources in Africa, the U.S. also focuses attention on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. One experimental program under this initiative is the Revenue Management System, under which the Government of Chad agreed to allow independent monitoring of expenditures in connection with revenues generated by the new Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline.[22]

Central Institution: The African Union

The African Union, with the support of the U.S., UN, and European Union, is working steadily to establish a role as a credible source of peace and stability in Africa. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) is the AU's decision-making body for prevention and resolution of conflict. The PSC in February 2004 approved a security plan that gives the AU authority to intervene in internal and interstate conflicts.[23] The principal mechanism for intervention would be the African Standby Force, composed of military and civilian contingents for rapid deployment. Five regional brigades, one for each major region in Africa, are envisioned.[24] The AU plan calls for each brigade to be ready to manage a complex peacekeeping operation by 2010.

Implementation of the African Standby Force plan is already underway in some regions. The Eastern Africa Standby Brigade has developed extensive plans for command

and control, and has mapped out various scenarios for which it will prepare to conduct operations.[25] In West Africa, the ECOWAS Monitoring Observer Group is already considered to be a capable regional peacekeeping force, with experience in Liberia and Sierra Leone.[26] The 11 Central African member nations of the CEEAC have agreed to establish a Central African Brigade with a force structure of 3,700 troops.[27] SADC is well along on preparations for the Southern Africa Standby Brigade.[28] Only in North Africa is there little evidence of significant preparatory work for a standby brigade.

One commentator has argued that the AU proposal for five regional brigades is "an incredible reach given regional capacities."[29] As an alternative, he suggests a single standby brigade designed for rapid response throughout the continent. Such a unit could be operational sooner, and could employ forces from existing "anchor" countries, such as Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa.

G8: A Key Resource Base

The U.S. works through the Group of Eight (G8) to coordinate development efforts in Africa with major donor nations. One component of the G8 program focuses on security and stability, including the establishment of an early warning system for conflict prevention.[30] For the 2005 G8 Summit in Scotland, the U.S. will argue for enhanced coordination on peace support operations, including the AU's plan for a Regional Standby Force. G8 programs support the development of mediation capacity of African regional economic institutions and the AU's capability for post-conflict reconstruction.[31] In addition, the G8 supports the establishment of Standby Force planning elements at AU headquarters and in each African sub-region. In 2004, G8 member nations agreed to support GPOI's goals.[32]

An Operational Structure for the Future

A more coordinated structure for U.S. peacetime operations in Africa would enhance the impact of current U.S. initiatives. Within this structure, more innovative recommendations could be developed. This structure should capture the whole picture in Africa and lay out a plan for operational engagement, development, and deterrence. The plan should be incorporated into the activities of Executive Branch agencies working in Africa, including the three combatant commands with responsibility over the continent. At the CoCom level, liaison officers and POLADs, working in concert with Joint Interagency Coordinating Groups, will ensure a common operational approach and mutually supporting activities.

This new structure can be implemented without legislation, without creating a new strategy or a new joint task force, and without additional resources, though funding will at some point become an issue as new ideas begin to flourish. (Note: All African states listed in the three-tier structure below are in EUCOM's AOR and State's Africa Bureau unless noted. The placement of states in each tier is subject to modification as planning moves ahead.)

Tier 1: Hub States

- North: Algeria (State NEA), Egypt (CENTCOM; State NEA)

- East: Kenya (CENTCOM), Tanzania

- West: Ghana, Nigeria

- Central: Angola, Gabon

- South: Botswana, South Africa

Tier 2: Foundation States

- North: Algeria (State NEA), Morocco (State NEA), Tunisia (State NEA)

- East: Djibouti (CENTCOM), Ethiopia (CENTCOM), Madagascar (PACOM), Mauritius (PACOM), Seychelles (CENTCOM), Uganda

- West: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, The Gambia

- Central: Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Sao Tome and Principe

- South: Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia

Tier 3: Focus States

- North: Libya (State NEA)

- East: Comoros (PACOM), Eritrea (CENTCOM), Somalia (CENTCOM), Sudan (CENTCOM)

- West: Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo

- Central: Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda

- South: Zimbabwe

Strategic characteristics of the tiers:

- Tier 1: U.S. ally in war on terror, large population, or key resources. Capacity for transfer of responsibility for security on continent. Includes hub states from each region rather than, as in the past, focusing on South Africa, West Africa, and East Africa.

- Tier 2: Friendly to U.S. but facing internal or external threats; opportunities for engagement; moderate risk of political instability. Foundation states typically – and dangerously – left out, as activities focus on hub states and focus states.

- Tier 3: Conditions not ripe for cooperation, poor governance; or substantial risk of state failure.

Operational objectives for each tier:

- Tier 1: Direct and substantial military assistance. Work with AU to develop regional standby force capabilities. Indigenous militaries capable of self-defense and participation in humanitarian relief operations, disaster response, and peacekeeping missions with limited support from the U.S. Hub states not responsible per se for security and stability in their particular region.

- Tier 2: Development assistance and military training. Indigenous militaries better prepared to conduct operations while respecting human rights and military standards of conduct. Draw these states into more multinational political-military activities to give them a stake in greater stability on the continent.

- Tier 3: Prevention or deterrence; contingency plans for state failure. Promote democratization through diplomatic activity. Promote economic connectedness.

Ways and means for each tier:

- Tier 1: Support regional centers of excellence, including Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center. Substantial military training and exercises. Expand existing security assistance programs, including Global Peace Operations Initiative.

- Tier 2: Synchronize existing governance and development assistance. Bolster efforts to combat corruption and strengthen rule of law. Support New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

- Tier 3: Hold the line against political instability. Flexible preventive/deterrent options may be involved. Non-combatant evacuation and humanitarian intervention preparedness.

Theater Security Cooperation

Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) plans would be better coordinated under a new common strategic and operational framework for Africa. Each of the combatant commands with responsibility in Africa seeks to promote regional stability by encouraging programs that support democratization, good governance, and conflict avoidance.[33] Political stability reduces the likelihood that U.S. forces will be called on to intervene, and produces conditions conducive for economic growth and the development of democratic institutions and the rule of law. In line with U.S. policy to ensure continued access to strategic facilities and lines of communication, TSC programs are also aimed at supporting critical infrastructure in key locations.

TSC plans focus on several areas to foster stability in African states, including strengthening regional institutions. Various programs seek to improve the ability of these organizations to conduct stability operations and fight terror on the African continent. TSC activities include security assistance as the primary avenue for achieving U.S. objectives, but also combined training and education, military contacts, and multinational exercises.[34]

The U.S. military conducts joint training and exercises with select African countries through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Joint Combined Exercise Training (JCET) programs.[35] Exercises also provide exposure to U.S. civil-military culture. In addition, African militaries in selected states are beneficiaries of the Department of State's Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. All these activities would be coordinated in the common framework for Africa.

Counter-Argument: A Unified Command for Africa?

Several commentators have recommended that the only way to resolve the lack of focus on Africa's strategic importance to the United States is to create a new unified command.[36] One could certainly make that argument, but the inevitable fact is that no matter how the lines are drawn, there will always be complications. As noted, the Department of State places the five states of North Africa in its Near Eastern Affairs Bureau, so one would have to extend the argument further and urge State to redraw its lines as well. That would lead to commentaries urging that the Arab world should not be divided based merely on geographic considerations, and that North Africa should therefore be returned to the fold to facilitate coordination on pan-Arab issues. The same could be said of the Horn of Africa vis-à-vis Arabian Peninsula issues. Such circular argumentation diverts attention from the real issue – the need for strategic and operational coordination no matter where the lines are drawn.

The structure recommended here renders moot the issue of revamping the combatant commands along different geographic lines. With a structure that provides a common platform of operational objectives for all the nations of Africa, each CoCom – EUCOM,

16

CENTCOM, and PACOM – will pursue consistent, synchronized, and mutually supportive programs.

Other Counter-Arguments

One could argue that existing bilateral programs, even if not appropriately coordinated across combatant command and interagency lines, are successful and simply require more funding. Unfortunately, there will never be sufficient resources. That makes achieving optimal results with limited funding all the more important. Another plausible approach would be to push for greater devolution of responsibility to regional partners such as the African Union. This is certainly part of a successful strategy, but it sidesteps an important issue: like it or not, the U.S. will become involved when its national interests are at stake.

One could also argue that our approach should be to focus on key partners in Africa largely at the exclusion of other states. While it is necessary to put resources into hub states in order to help Africa help itself, it would be risky to place too much emphasis on this alone. A coordinated framework ensures that key partners, states at risk of failure, and all those in between are progressing toward stability and democracy, even if at different paces. Likewise, a strategy that focuses too much on failing states at the expense of those not in quite such precarious circumstances might avoid the most serious risks, but would fail to take advantage of opportunities to make progress across the board on the African continent.

The argument for a single African Standby Force instead of five regional brigades is sound, although it could be seen as having less legitimacy than a more comprehensive system of conflict management. In fact, the common plan outlined here includes the idea of relying on states with greater capacity first, while not neglecting the need to develop the capabilities

of the rest of the nations of Africa.[37] In that sense, it incorporates both the AU plan and its

alternative, implementing both in a logical sequence.

Conclusion: **Africa – Use It or Lose It**

One could argue persuasively that the U.S. talks the talk at the strategic level on

Africa, but doesn't walk the walk. The risks of unfocused action are substantial: instability

leading to a breeding ground for terrorism, or conflict leading to calls for U.S. intervention.

At the operational level, the main obstacle is resource constraints, which follows from the

lack of commitment at the strategic level. But that does not mean there are no significant

opportunities to advance U.S. interests at the operational level. Current programs and

activities are achieving some gains, but not all at the same pace or with the same impact from

place to place.

The principal benefit of coordination is unity of effort among combatant commands

and the interagency and multinational communities. Several other principles of operations

other than war also apply: perseverance, legitimacy, and a clearly defined objective.[38] A

coordinated plan that targets states on three levels, working with all partners, and using all

instruments of national power, is well suited to achieve both long-term and short-term

objectives, including conflict prevention and resolution, political stability, and

democratization.

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